THE ROLE OF MEETINGS IN THE STRATEGY PROCESS

- TOWARDS AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK –

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ABSTRACT

During the last three decades, scholars from communication studies, political science, sociology, cultural anthropology and management science have studied the characteristics and dynamics of meetings from different perspectives. This has resulted in a large, though very fragmented, body of knowledge about meetings and their different functions in the organization. So far, however, this knowledge has not been systematically related to the strategy process. The purpose of this review is to organize the different literatures by identifying the meeting functions (coordination, cognitive, political, symbolic and social) as well as the meeting practices (initiation, conduct and termination practices) and by outlining the impact of meetings on the strategy process. This results in an integrative framework which synthesizes the literature and which serves as a guide for future research.

Keywords: Strategy-as-practice, meetings, strategy process

INTRODUCTION

The recent turn of strategy research towards practice-based theorizing (Jarzabkowksi et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007; Whittington, 1996, 2006) has led to an increasing focus on the micro-level practices and processes which constitute the day-to-day activities influencing strategy formation. Strategy, it is argued, is better conceptualized as something people *do* rather than something that firms in their markets *have* (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). While the strategy-as-practice approach acknowledges the importance of informal practices that have been the focus of earlier research (Dalton, 1959; Kotter, 1982; Mintzberg, 1973), there is also a renewed interest in formal strategic practices (Whittington, 2003; Whittington et al., 2006). Recent research on formal practices has investigated for example the role of administrative routines (Jarzabkowski, 2003, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002) or the use of various strategic management tools (Kaplan and Jarzabkowski, 2006; Stenfors et al., 2007; Kaplan, 2010) in strategy-making.

One particular formal practice that has received increasing attention in recent years is the meeting (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2010; Seidl et al., 2010). According to Schwartzman (1989: 7), a meeting can be defined as "a communicative event involving three or more people who agree to assemble for a purpose ostensibly related to the functioning of an organization or group". Meetings can take many different forms: they can be scheduled or unscheduled, singular or recurring, on-site or off-site. In their many different forms meetings are a pervasive phenomenon in organizational life. Indeed, in his classical study, Mintzberg (1973) found that managers spent on average 59% of their time in scheduled meetings and 10% in unscheduled ones. These findings were corroborated by subsequent studies (Lewis and Dahl, 1975; Ives and Olsen, 1981; Kurke and Aldrich, 1983; Moswick and Nelson, 1987; Tobia and Becker, 1990). Moreover, it was estimated that more than eleven million meetings take place in the United States every day (Doyle and Straus, 1976) and that organizations like 3M spent seven and fifteen percent of their personnel budget on meetings (Monge et al., 1989).

Although meetings have been an object of study in political science (e.g. Adams, 2004; Tepper, 2004), communication studies (Seibold, 1979; Cooren, 2007; Asmuß and Svennevig, 2009), sociology (e.g. Boden, 1994, 1995; Van Vree, 1999) and anthropology (Bailey, 1965; Black, 1983; Frake, 1969; Howe, 1986; Myers, 1986; Schwartzman, 1989) for a long time, the strategic management literature has, until very recently, not explicitly been concerned

with the particular role of meetings in the strategy process, apart from providing a 'neutral' frame within which the coordination of organizational activities takes place (Schwartzman, 1989). Hence, despite the large amount of time and resources devoted to meetings, researchers have so far predominantly studied topics that occur *within* them instead of investigating meetings *per se*. For example, meetings were used to study various types of decision-making processes such as budgeting decisions (Hofstede, 1968) or strategic decisions (Mintzberg et al., 1976), but meetings as such were not the main focus of research.

Contemporary work, however, suggests that meetings do not just provide empty shells for decision-making processes which could as easily have taken place elsewhere, but that they actively shape organizational processes (Boden, 1994; Schwartzman, 1989). This influence is reflected through the different organizational functions that have been associated with meetings, such as sense-making (Weick, 1995), information gathering (Schwartzman, 1989) and agenda setting (Adams, 2004; Tepper, 2004). More recently, studies have shown that meetings may directly affect the strategy process by stabilizing existing strategies or by shaping strategic change (Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Johnson et al. 2010). Yet, despite these studies we still know relatively little about the particular ways in which meetings influence strategy-making. This also explains the recent call for more research into the role of meetings in strategy formation (see Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Johnson et al., 2007; Wooldridge et al., 2008; Johnson et al. 2010). In response to this call, the present paper aims at developing an integrative framework that relates the different meeting functions and meeting practices that have been identified in earlier literatures to the strategy process. In this way we also provide a basis for an exchange between the previously fragmented literatures on meetings and are able to map potential areas for future research into this important organizational practice.

The rest of this paper is organized into four sections. First, we identify the relevant literatures and specify their particular contributions to our understanding of meetings. Based on a careful examination of the theoretical and empirical findings and insights, we develop an integrative framework, including key contingency factors, meeting functions and practices, and their relation to the strategy processes. Second, on the basis of this framework we review and map the existing research synthesizing what we have learned about meetings so far. Third, we identify underexplored areas within the framework and provide suggestions for future research. We conclude with a brief reflection on the contributions of this study.

DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

I. Identification of the Relevant Literatures

As mentioned in the previous section, the study of meetings encompasses a wide range of academic disciples. We identified these disciplines by looking for the keywords "meeting and organization" and "workshop and organization" in the *subject* terms section of *Business Source Premier Publication* data-base, for all dates. We used this data-base for its comprehensiveness, interdisciplinary and its potential to identify papers which are related to the strategy process. This procedure allowed us to identify 254 references for the former keywords, and 77 references for the latter. We screened these articles by looking for papers which explicitly look at the functions and practices of meetings in organizations. This allowed us to identify 31 initial papers. Then, using snowball effect, we identified 60 papers and books which form the foundation of this paper (see table 2 in the appendix). Using this approach, we identified five distinct academic disciplines, each emphasizing a different aspect of meetings. These disciplines are: (1) cultural anthropology, (2) political science, (3) communication studies, (4) sociology, and (5) management studies.

(1) Cultural anthropology is the branch of anthropology which examines human cultures and its impact on human behavior. Traditionally, researchers in this field have studied meetings in non-western societies to investigate how culture is expressed in meetings and what kind of role meetings play in particular cultural settings (e.g. Bailey, 1965; Black, 1983; Frake, 1969; Howe, 1986; Myers, 1986). For example, Bailey (1965) focuses on decision-making in Indian village Panchayats, and Howe (1986) draws a detailed picture of village-level politics in Panama from the standpoint of its meetings. Recognizing the significance of meetings as a cultural phenomenon, Schwartzman (1989) juxtaposes her own research at an American mental health organization with anthropological research in non-Western societies to demonstrate the importance of meetings in American society. Based on ethnography and participant observation, these cultural anthropologists provide us with rich, in-depth descriptions of the practices and features of meetings in different contexts.

(2) In political science, researchers have studied political behavior in meetings and their larger role in political systems. From this perspective, meetings are crucial to set and advance an agenda, to form alliances and coalitions, and to suppress or keep specific

topics alive (Adams, 2004; Tepper, 2004). For example, Tepper (2004) analyzes the role of “non-routine” gatherings or strategic forums in the formation of policies.

(3) Communication studies encompass a wide range of topics and contexts, all concerned with processes of communication. Since meetings are an ubiquitous setting of communication, it is not surprising that scholars in this academic field have long taken an interest in meetings (Seibold, 1979; Cooren, 2007; Asmuß and Svennevig, 2009). Research in this area focuses on the communicative and linguistic aspects of meetings, such as turn-taking and specific features of language and talk which influence meetings and discussions in meetings. For example, Seibold (1979) identifies the different formats and procedures which can be used in meetings to enhance and improve the communication process.

(4) In sociology, researchers have studied the way in which meeting activities contribute to the generation and reproduction of social structures and how they are themselves both enabled and constrained by them (e.g. Boden, 1994, 1995; Van Vree, 1999). For instance, Boden (1994: 1) focuses on everyday talk in organizations and how it contributes to *the structuring of organizations*. Since meetings are essentially the place where organizations come together, she shows how social organizations are constructed and sustained through meetings. In contrast, Van Vree (1999) uses the development of meeting behavior over time as a way to chart the civilization process of our modern society thereby highlighting the importance of meetings in understanding society as well as organizations.

(5) In the traditional management literature, meetings have not been considered a research object *per se*, but have rather been treated as the background for studying organizational coordination. In the past, management scholars have analyzed meetings to uncover the structure of strategic decision-making processes (Mintzberg et al., 1976), to examine decisions made in organized anarchies (March and Olsen, 1976), to map decision-making processes of major events like the Cuban missile crisis (Allison, 1971), or to document decision-making in high velocity environments (Eisenhardt, 1989). However, as has been already pointed out, in recent years there has been a new interest in meetings as organizational phenomena and their relation to strategy formation (Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Johnson et al., 2010). These recent developments are taken into account in the following.

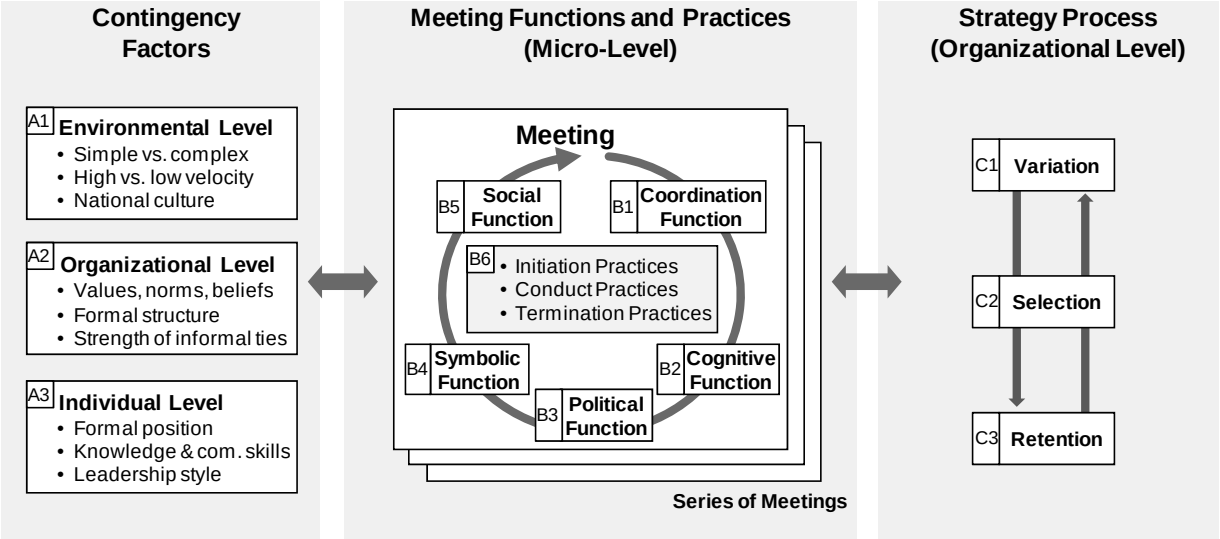
II. Toward an Integrative Framework

Following Ginsberg and Venkatraman (1985), Strauss and Corbin (1998), Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) and Wooldridge and colleagues (2008), we use an analytical scheme to organize our literature review according to the *antecedents* of a phenomenon, the *processes* describing the phenomenon, and the related *outcomes*. In our case, an in-depth analysis of the relevant literatures has revealed three broad categories which parallel this scheme and which are relevant to understand the role of meetings in the strategy process: (A) the *contingency factors*, (B) the *meeting functions and practices*, and (C) their *impact on different aspects of the strategy process*. Before presenting the literature at length, we briefly describe our integrative framework which is represented in figure 1.

Our literature review suggests that meetings fulfill five functions (tagged B1 to B5 in figure 1) in organizations and are characterized by three different types of practices (tagged B6 in figure 1). Firstly, as the research in management studies suggests, meetings often have a *coordination* function (B1) because they are at the hub of various important organizational activities such as determining the future course of action, information pooling as well as delegation and monitoring of tasks (Mintzberg et al., 1976; Volkema and Niederman, 1996; Adams, 2004). Secondly, scholars from different disciplines point out that meetings have a *cognitive* function (B2) in so far as they contribute to sense-making, the recognition of issues and problems, the critical reflection, generation and development of new ideas (Weick, 1995; Schwartzman, 1989; Hendry and Seidl, 2003; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Bürgi et al., 2005). Thirdly, political studies emphasize that meetings have a *political* function (B3) to the extent that they contribute to setting and advancing agendas, forming alliances and building support, exerting influence, bargaining, keeping specific topics alive and suppressing new ideas (Adams, 2004; Tepper, 2004; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Boden, 1995). Fourthly, cultural anthropologists and, more recently, also management scholars point to the *symbolic* function (B4) of meetings in so far as they legitimize and validate the established order, signal status and provide a platform for organizational rituals (Schwartzman, 1979; Hendry and Seidl, 2003; Johnson et al., 2010). Finally, scholars from various academic fields indicate that meetings have an important *social* function (B5) that allows organizational members to establish relationships and develop networks, build group and organizational identity, display emotions and form values, norms and beliefs (Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Adams, 2004; Schwartzman, 1979; Bürgi et al., 2005; Tracy, 2007; Kangasharju and Nikko, 2009). These functions represent different facets of meetings which play various

roles for the organization and its members. Taken together, these five functions of meetings constitute a powerful analytical tool to understand the dynamics and the contribution of meetings to organizational processes generally and to the strategy process in particular.

FIGURE 1:
INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK ON MEETINGS AND STRATEGY PROCESS



While meetings serve different functions in organizations, they are also the site of several meeting practices (B6), i.e. "routinized types of behavior" (Reckwitz, 2002: 249). As has been variously suggested in the literature (Hendry and Seidl, 2003; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Schwarz and Balogun, 2007), these practices can be categorized into three groups according to the different phases of the meeting: (1) *initiation practices* refer to the set-up of the meeting before and at its beginning; (2) *conduct practices* refer to the way the meeting is carried out; and (3) *termination practices* refer to the way meetings are concluded and connected to other meetings. Meeting practices, like all practices, typically involve bodily activities (Rasche and Chia, 2009), discourses (Samra-Fredericks, 2003) and the use of artifacts (Rasche and Chia, 2009). As meeting practices are sequential activities, time constitutes a fourth crucial element of meeting practices (e.g. Kangarsharju, 1996, 2002). That is why, while the focus of this framework is on the individual meeting, we emphasize that meetings are mostly (explicitly or implicitly) embedded in larger series of meetings (Schwartzman, 1989; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2007).

Extant research suggests that meeting functions and meeting practices are significantly influenced by contingent factors on the environmental (A1), organizational (A2) and individual (A3) levels. For example, the management literature provides insights which

suggest that the complexity (Grant, 2003) and dynamism (Eisenhardt, 1989) of the *environment* influence the way meetings are carried out. At the *organizational* level, norms, values and beliefs influence the way participants behave in meetings, what is considered (in)appropriate and how issues or topics are interpreted (e.g., Weick, 1995; Schwartzman, 1989; Peck et al., 2004). In the same manner, group-related norms, values and beliefs as well as group identity are likely to influence meeting functions and practices. At the same time, the formal structure of an organization and the strength of informal ties can influence meeting dynamics (Schwartzman, 1989; Oswick, 2007; Bailey, 1965). Finally, characteristics and skills of the *individuals* participating in meetings may play a crucial role in how meetings unfold and develop. For example, someone's linguistic skills may provide the power and opportunity to steer discussions in a preferred direction in order to convince people (Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Boden, 1995; Huisman, 2001). Managers' leadership style may also influence interactions which are taking place in meetings (Asmuß and Svennevig, 2009; Nielsen, 2009; Weick, 1995).

While meeting functions and practices are influenced by contingency factors, they also shape the strategy process of organizations. In an attempt to conceptualize the relationship between meetings and the strategy process, the literature on organization studies has often conceptualized the strategy process (C) in evolutionary terms (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Bowman, 1995; Seidl et al., 2010; MacIntosh et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2010; Hendry and Seidl, 2003), i.e. as a process of variation (C1), selection (C2) and retention (C3). For instance, Hendry and Seidl (2003) as well as Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) explicitly draw on an evolutionary model to explain the role of meetings in strategic stability and change. We use such a model because it lends itself particularly well to a general research framework as it is at the same time comprehensive and flexible with regards to different assumptions about the nature of social action. Furthermore, the mobilization of the evolutionary model is also in line with a more general trend in management studies (e.g. Weick, 1979; Nelson and Winter, 1982; Burgelman, 1991) and in strategy-as-practice research in particular (Salvato, 2003).

To sum up, the framework highlights three broad categories to understand the phenomenon: 1) Five meeting functions (coordination, cognitive, political, symbolic and social) and three general meeting practices (initiation, conduct and termination); 2) three sets of contingency factors: environmental, organizational, and individual levels; and 3) three elements of the strategy process: variation (emergence of several strategic initiatives), selection (choosing one

alternative) and retention (implementing an alternative which remains in the organization for a sufficiently long period of time or the continuity of the current strategy). By using bidirectional arrows between these three broad categories, we intend to symbolize the potential recursive and reciprocal relations between them. Table 1 presents a review matrix which shows where knowledge has started being cumulated and where the gaps are. Table 2 (see appendix) describes the main functions of meetings in organizations and summarizes the key findings of the literature in terms of contingency factors, the meetings functions and practices, and their impact on the strategy process. In addition, since this table constitutes the primary material of this paper, the main research question, the academic field where it belongs, the theoretical lens used and the methodology of each paper are portrayed. To simplify the presentation and avoid redundancies, the literature is presented in alphabetical order in the table.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

After having briefly presented our integrative framework, we now present each part of it in greater details in order to have a better understanding of the function of meetings and of their practices, to get a better grasp over the contingency factors affecting meetings, and to synthesize our knowledge on the impact of meeting on the strategy process. We review the literature for each of these aspects in the following section. Because some studies make contributions across several categories of our framework, some papers or books may be discussed in more than one section.

TABLE 1:
LINKAGE-EXPLORING REVIEW MATRIX ON MEETING AND THE STATEGY PROCESS[1]

	B1 Coordination Function	B2 Cognitive Function	B3 Political Function	B4 Symbolic Function	B5 Social Function	B6 Initiation, conduct and termination practices	C1 Variation	C2 Selection	C3 Retention
A1 Environmental Contingency Factors	15, 19, 60	15, 19, 44, 59			15	33			
A2 Organizational Contingency Factors	3, 24	7, 44, 59	5, 30	42, 44	41, 44	33, 51			
A3 Individual Contingency Factors	7, 10, 24, 43	2, 10, 24, 39, 43, 59	2, 13, 31, 43	43	43	5, 18, 51			
B1 Coordination Function								12, 23, 27, 44	27
B2 Cognitive Function			5		5, 48		9, 18, 34, 35, 47		9, 18
B3 Political Function	13, 31						1, 27, 34, 46, 60	1, 27	27
B4 Symbolic Function		8			8, 28		29, 34, 42		20, 29
B5 Social Function							21, 34, 48		
B6 Initiation, conduct and termination practices	3, 6, 18, 33, 37, 46	5, 17, 21, 33, 34, 35, 39, 43, 46, 47, 49, 51	2, 4, 5, 7, 11, 13, 21, 26, 30, 31, 33, 43, 46, 49, 56, 60	4, 17, 21, 23, 46, 51, 52, 56	11, 23, 29, 32, 35, 39, 44, 46, 55				

I. Meeting Functions and Meeting Practices

As outlined above, the literature suggests that meetings perform functions in organizations: (B1) coordination, (B2) cognitive, (B3) political, (B4) symbolic and (B5) social functions. Table 3 summarizes the functions and their respective dimensions. It also provides exemplary studies of these dimensions and functions. The majority of studies on meetings highlights one or more meeting functions. These functions often materialize in different meeting practices (B6) which are going to be described right after the meeting functions. What we know about the relationship between meeting functions and meeting practices will constitute part of the section entitled *Impact on the strategy process.*

[1] Numbers are referring to the codes of the paper in table 2

TABLE 3:
FUNCTIONS OF MEETINGS

Functions	Specific Dimensions	Exemplary Studies
Coordination	Synchronization	Boden, 1995; Brinkerhoff, 1972
	Determination of future action	Mintzberg et al., 1976 ; Huisman, 2001 ; Clifton, 2009
	Pooling and distribution of information	Tepper, 2004; Schwartzman, 1989; Boden, 1994
	Distribution and monitoring of tasks	Christiansen and Varnes, 2007; Mirivel and Tracy, 2005; Kaplan, 2010
Cognitive	Sense-making	Weick, 1995; Schwartzman, 1989; Mezias et al., 2001
	Critical reflection	Hendry and Seidl, 2003; Mezias et al., 2001; Bowman, 1995
	Generating and developing new ideas	Jarzabkowski, Seidl 2008 ; Hodgkinson et al., 2006 ; Mezias et al., 2001
	Recognition of issues/ problems and their importance	Schwartzman, 1989; Mezias et al., 2001; Terry, 1987
	Search and screening for solutions	Seibold, 1979; Mintzberg et al., 1976
Political	Set and advance agenda	Tepper, 2004; Adams, 2004
	Exert influence	Samra-Fredericks, 2003; van Praet, 2009; Clifton, 2009
	Bargaining	Boden, 1995; Mintzberg, 1973
	Keeping topics on the agenda	Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Tepper, 2004
	Suppression of new ideas	Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Schwarz, 2009
	Formation of alliances/ building support	Kangasharju 1996, 2002; Tepper, 2004; Adams, 2004
Symbolic	Legitimation/ validation of established order	Schwartzman, 1979; Boden, 1994; Adams, 2004
	Ritual	Hendry and Seidl, 2003 ; Johnson et al., 2010; Starker, 1978
	Status and status change	Schwartzman, 1979; Boden, 1994; van Praet, 2009
Social	Establish networks and relationships	Tepper, 2004; Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Mirivel and Tracy, 2005
	Build group and organizational identity	Schwartzman, 1989; Bürgi et al., 2005; Mirivel and Tracy, 2005
	Form social values, norms and beliefs	Schwartzman, 1989; Bürgi et al., 2005; Mirivel and Tracy, 2005
	Display of emotions	van Vree, 1999; Tracy, 2007; Kangasharju and Nikko, 2009

B1. Coordination Function of Meetings

A central role of meetings is to bring people together and to coordinate the different activities within an organization. In fact, Boden (1995: 86) sees the importance of meetings in the 'synchronization' of different processes, i.e. in "ensuring that the 'right people' see each other at the 'right time'" and look at the same problem. Similarly, Brinkerhoff (1972), investigating the use of staff conferences by managers, saw the purpose of meeting consisting of bringing people together to coordinate activities and to solve *contingencies* or problems. By bringing people together, meetings also allow the coordination of the future course of action (Mintzberg et al., 1976; Huisman, 2001; Clifton, 2009). As Clifton (2009) remarks, to

determine future actions, an authorized participant of the meeting, such as the chair or a manager, needs to project a course of future action and, importantly, meeting participants need to agree, either by verbal or nonverbal means, such as nodding.

The assembling of people also allows the pooling and distribution of information, a third central coordination function of meetings (Adams, 2004; Mintzberg, 1973; Seibold, 1979; Tepper, 2004; Terry, 1987; Boden, 1995). Indeed, as Schwartzman (1989) puts it, meetings even 'produce' information by making information visible (e.g., in reports, minutes etc.) and distributing it to other meeting participants. Similarly, Tepper (2004) sees a crucial role of meetings in drawing attention to new information and summarizing it in reports that can form the basis for future debate. Likewise, Adams (2004) argues that public hearings are important for conveying information to policy-makers, such as public interest and opinions on specific issues.

Investigating meetings across different organizational units, Blackler and colleagues (2000) find that these meetings serve as an important source of information exchange. Considering the size of meetings, Boden (1994) as well as Mirivel and Tracy (2005) found that larger meetings are typically more information-oriented, while smaller meetings are more decision-oriented, i.e. oriented towards determining a future course of action. In fact, as Bailey (1965) suggests, deciding on a future course of actions becomes increasingly difficult as the number of participants in a group increases. Finally, meetings are also used to distribute responsibilities for tasks and to monitor the progress of these tasks (Christiansen and Varnes, 2007; Volkema and Niederman, 1996; Mirivel and Tracy, 2005; Kaplan, 2010).

B2. Cognitive Function of Meetings

Meetings can also have an impact on organizational action by shaping collective cognition. As Weick (1995) remarks, because meetings constitute the settings where most arguments take place, they are often portrayed as a central sense-making device. From this perspective, meetings shape socio-cultural systems as well as being shaped by them (Schwartzman, 1989). In fact, Schwartzman recognizes that meetings might not only be the place for decisions or problem solving to occur, but they may also be "what decisions, problems, and crises are about" (Schwartzman, 1989:9). From this point of view, decisions and problems happen because they engender meetings which may, in turn, produce organizations (Schwartzman, 1989). The more people need to make sense of what is going on, the more meetings are

scheduled and as a result, the more problems are recognized and decisions made. Hence, Weick draws the conclusion "that people need to meet more often" (Weick, 1995: 185).

Investigating a three-day board meeting, Taylor and Robichaud (2007) find that narratives are an important sense-making device employed in meetings. Participants not only tell stories by themselves, but also engage in joint storytelling (Kangasharju, 1996; Mirivel and Tracy, 2005). Besides their central role in sense-making, meetings also play an essential role in critical reflection. As Grant (2003) points out, strategic planning meetings are increasingly used to challenge underlying assumptions and beliefs and to identify critical issues. Especially in strategy workshops, the separation between meetings and usual day-to-day activities enables participants to step out of their established routines and mindsets in order to reflect critically on the organization's strategic orientations (Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Hendry and Seidl, 2003; Johnson et al., 2010). As a result, this may actually lead to generating and developing new ideas (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008). Finally, collective cognition in meetings also allows recognizing issues and problems when discussing a certain topic (Schwartzman, 1989; Bürgi et al., 2005; Terry, 1987). For example, Bürgi et al. (2005) demonstrate how the construction of the competitive landscape with LEGO bricks enables workshop participants to recognize the threat of a so far underestimated competitor. Additionally, as both Terry (1987) and Schwartzman (1989) stress, meetings allow participants to better grasp the size and significance of a problem.

B3. Political Function of Meetings

By providing participants with a forum for negotiations and bargaining (Mintzberg, 1973; Boden, 1995), meetings often play an important political role in organizations. For instance, meetings are used for setting agendas (Adams, 2004; Tepper, 2004; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Schwarz and Balogun, 2007) in order for individuals or groups to advance their own interest. Similarly, meetings are often seen as an arena of influence to shape discussions and produce results in the interest of particular individuals or groups. As various scholars recognize, controlling the agenda and chairing the discussion allows individual participants to dominate a meeting and steer it in their interest (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Volkema and Niederman, 1996). However, also more subtle means such as laughter or particular formulations allowing others to take ownership enable participants to exert influence in a meeting (Clifton, 2009).

Meetings are also a forum for participants to form teams and alliances (Taylor and Robichaud, 2007) not only to influence decision making or engage in conflicts, but also to correct one-sided statements which may give a wrong impression (Kangasharju, 2002). Meetings may also be used by managers to reach a settlement (Frake, 1969), sustain a coalition (Tepper, 2004) or mobilize interest groups to voice their particular concerns (Tepper, 2004). For example, Jarzabkowski and Balogun (2009) observed how the political interaction over the course of several meetings shaped the conversational roles and dynamics, finally resulting in an alignment of interest among previously opposing parties. Meetings, in this sense, can contribute to mobilizing support by increasing the acceptance of decisions and enhancing the motivation to implement decisions (Seibold, 1979), and promoting unity and cohesiveness (Seibold, 1979). Finally, they can keep specific topics alive within the organization until an opportunity for decision arises (Tepper, 2004) or simply contribute to the suppression of new ideas (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008).

B4. Symbolic Function of Meetings

As Boden remarks "meetings must, at least in part, be seen as symbolic affairs", not only because they follow certain routines and patterns, but because they remain a vital aspect of organizational life, despite a decreasing practical need to physically assemble (Boden, 1995:106). When an organizational member accepts participating in a meeting without questioning its format or without overtly disagreeing to the setting of the meeting, he or she agrees to the established order that is embedded in it (Bailey, 1965; Schwartzman, 1989). Thus, meetings can play a symbolic role in the sense that by complying with the established order in a meeting, members contribute to the perpetuation and legitimation of its structure. Along the same lines, Black (1983) suggests that meetings are often the occasion for individuals to see and interpret their own and other people's status. For instance, the head of a group or community signals his status and power by coming late to a meeting and silencing his audience by a quiet cough or gaze (Black, 1983; van Praet, 2009). Meeting participants contribute to the validation of the established order by adhering to appropriate behavior and etiquette, for instance by falling silent when the person of higher status enters the room (Black, 1983). Additionally, explicit speech in meetings is often accompanied by implicit expressions about status, rights and obligations (Taylor and Robichaud, 2007; Schwartzman, 1989).

The symbolic function of meetings can also be manifested through rituals, as first pointed out by the early work of Olsen (1970). He remarks in his paper on budgetary decisions that whereas most studies on budgeting believe that resource allocation should be the central focus of analysis, it is indeed the ritual surrounding budgetary decisions which might be of interest. From this early observation, researchers have started to analyze meetings themselves as rituals. Johnson and colleagues (Bourque and Johnson, 2008; Johnson et al. 2006; Johnson et al., 2010), for example, have examined away-day meetings arguing that the removal of the meeting participants from their daily working routines creates "liminal" experiences analogously to that which has been observed in rites of transition (Alexander, 1997). The three phases typically associated with a ritual, i.e. separation, transition and incorporation (van Gennep 1909/1960), can also be observed in away-day meetings, allowing meeting participants to distance themselves from the everyday, critically review and challenge the existing structure and take with them symbols of the initiated changes when returning to the original organizations, such as a list of actions or a flip chart (Johnson et al., 2006; Bourque and Johnson, 2008). As Johnson and colleagues (2006) suggest, it might also be helpful to distinguish between the front stage performance of workshops and the backstage where participants reassemble and prepare for the next 'show'. For instance, they identify breaks to a meeting as an opportunity for participants to discuss issues or topics that would not have been possible in more formal parts or periods of a meeting (Johnson et al., 2006). Moreover, rituals are used to signal status or status change. For example, an earlier study showed that case conferences of mental health professionals in the United States have a ritual function as they serve as a rite of passage for new members and as they underline status change in the association (Starker, 1978). Finally, meetings might also signal the importance of an issue. When a meeting on a specific topic recurs and the number and seniority of meeting participants increases, this typically symbolizes the importance of the issue discussed (Schwartzman, 1989).

B5. Social Function of Meetings

An often overlooked, but nevertheless important function of meetings is their role in the socialization process in organizations. According to Nielsen (2009) meetings play a crucial role in the socialization of new organizational members by showing to them the organizational vocabulary and its associated meaning as well as social norms, values and beliefs. Indeed, beliefs about what is right and reasonable and norms of appropriate behavior are often negotiated and discussed in meetings. For instance, norms concerning the

expressions of emotions shape and are shaped by meetings (Schwartzman, 1989; Tracy, 2007). Similarly, meetings institutionalize specific codes of speech (Peck et al. 2004; Bürgi et al., 2005; Nielsen, 2009) which determine which vocabulary is used in strategy-making. Along the same lines, van Praet (2009) observes how the ambassador at a British Embassy uses his staff meetings to promote his hierarchy-based values of interaction and behavior. Meetings also allow organizational members to construct and negotiate their group or organizational identity (Schwartzman, 1989; Bürgi et al., 2005; Mirivel and Tracy, 2005; Myers, 1986) which may contribute to build social solidarity among members of a community (Peck et al., 2004).

Emotions play a central role in meeting by providing a positive atmosphere (Tracy, 2007; Kangasharju and Nikko, 2009). For instance, laughter and humor is often associated with collegiality, a positive atmosphere and mutual understanding (Kangasharju and Nikko, 2009; van Praet, 2009). The sociological research of van Vree shows that modern meetings in fact "require a relatively large, precise, constant and flexible self-regulation of expressions of affect and emotions" (van Vree, 1999: 197). How much and what kinds of feelings are appropriate to express crucially depends on the type of meeting, the people involved as well as the content discussed (Tracy, 2007). For instance, Tracy (2007) observes that important topics are typically associated with more intense feelings.

Finally, meetings are also important in building and sustaining relationships and networks within organizations (Adam, 2004; Tepper, 2004; Terry, 1987) and among top managers (Hodgkinson et al., 2006). For example, Myers (1986) notes that meetings must first sustain social relations among participants before specific topics are discussed. As Schwartzman emphasizes, meetings "enable individuals to negotiate and validate their relationships to each other" (Schwartzman, 1989:11). In fact, implicit meanings associated with specific expressions and formulations in meetings allow "individuals to negotiate and/or comment on their formal and informal social relationships while they appear to be making a decision, solving a problem" (Schwartzman, 1989:43). Oswick (2007) also recognizes the importance of the relationships and networks to shape meeting dynamics.

B.6 Meeting practices

The previous sections presented the five functions of meeting. While necessary to understand meetings, they are not sufficient to grasp the whole phenomenon. Indeed, meetings are also constituted of practices which may be or not the expression of these five functions. Based on

previous works on meetings (Hendry and Seidl, 2003; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008), we categorize meeting practices in three groups *initiation, conduct* and *termination* practices.

Scholars from communication, sociology, anthropology, management and political studies recognize the importance of *initiation practices* to influence meeting dynamics. The initiation practices refer to before and the beginning of meeting and have several dimensions. One of them is the composition of participants. It is obvious that who takes part in a meeting will have a significant effect on meeting dynamics. In fact, if only one particular individual (especially an influential one) is missing, meeting dynamics may look very different from what they would be otherwise. Hence, who is *bracketed in* and who is *bracketed out* from a meeting (Boden 1994) is of crucial importance. For example, participation of top managers to meetings signals commitment and endows the meeting with more authority (MacIntosh et al. 2010; Mezias et al., 2001). Typically, participants are deliberately chosen to participate in a meeting, be it for their particular perspective, their status or their expertise (Blackler et al., 2000). The decision on who may chair the meeting is similarly crucial because it allows the person to exert considerable influence over meeting dynamics and its outcomes (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008). In strategy workshops, it is quite common to invite an external person to facilitate the meeting (Mezias et al., 2010; Schwarz, 2009). The facilitator then is typically meant to be a neutral person that guides the discussion and counterbalances political interest groups (Schwarz and Balogun, 2007). Johnson et al. (2010) observe that the use of a facilitator in strategy workshops is an important part of the ritual and contributes to the creation of an atmosphere where participants can critically reflect on their current strategic direction.

Another dimension of *initiation practices* is the scheduling of meetings. This dimension is crucial in meeting for two reasons. It indicates when a meeting takes place, but more importantly, it specifies which position the item occupies on the agenda and how much time is allotted to. For example, Whittington et al. (2006) observe that time-tabling allows the CEO to influence a series of workshops in such a way as to achieve the desired outcome. On a similar note, deciding when a meeting is to take place can indirectly determine who can take part in the meeting and who cannot (Schwartzman, 1989). Likewise, determining the time allotted to a meeting or workshop (a few hours versus a few days), has an influence on what kind, breadth and depth of topics can be discussed (Mezias et al., 2010; MacIntosh et al., 2010).

The location of the meeting has often an impact on meeting dynamics. For example, various scholars have identified that placing away strategy workshops from the office is a crucial element to create the appropriate atmosphere for critical reflection and relationship building (Mezias et al., 2010; Schwarz and Balogun, 2007; Johnson et al., 2010; MacIntosh et al., 2010; Schwarz, 2009). Finally, the opening of the meeting is crucial to set the tone and atmosphere of what is to come. For instance, Kangasharju and Nikko (2009) observed that chairs of meetings use humor and laughter to set a more informal and co-operative tone in meetings.

Conduct practices are at the heart of meetings because they constitute how the meeting develops over time. Numerous conduct practices have been identified depending on the focus of analysis such as different types of turn-taking (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Schwartzman, 1989; Boden, 1994), employing different formulations and linguistic devices (Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Boden, 1995; Huisman, 2001), particular facial expressions or body movements (Schwarz and Balogun, 2007; Schwarz, 2009; Howe, 1986; Hodgkinson and Wright, 2002) and the use of specific objects (Kaplan, 2010; Stephens and Davis, 2009; Volkeman and Niederman, 1996; Schwarz and Balogun, 2007). These practices can be described in terms of bodily activities, talking and the use of artifacts.

Talking refers to anything related to the speech process. It is characterized by turn-taking or the use of appropriate non-verbal codes in a given communication context. Turn-taking in meetings can differ depending on the formal or informal nature of meeting (Schwartzman, 1989; Boden, 1994; Asmuß and Svennevig, 2009). For instance, in informal meetings turn-taking is characterized by long turns as participants are expected to provide reports, accounts and position statements (Boden, 1994; Kangasharju, 2002). In formal meetings, turn-taking is frequently managed by the chairs of the meetings, allowing them to influence the discussion according to their interests. Supporting this notion, Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) identify four different forms of turn-taking: free discussion, restricted free discussion, restricted discussion and administrative discussion. As Gautam (2005) points out, meetings may be ineffective when turn-taking is not effectively managed by the chair and the discussions get side-tracked. While turn-taking can be explicitly expressed in talk, it is mostly done by nonverbal means, i.e. bodily activities such as raising a hand. Likewise, the transition between different topics and agenda items is not only negotiated through talk, but also through

nonverbal means such as gaze, head movements or gestures and the use of artifacts such as taking a cup of coffee (Deppermann et al., 2010).

In discussions, specific linguistic mechanisms may be used by meeting participants to influence the direction and dynamics of the meeting. For instance, Samra-Fredericks (2003) shows how questions and queries can subtly guide decision-making processes, while the use of metaphors, referring to the past and display of emotions in talk support persuasion and sense-giving by individual meeting participants. Similarly, relational and *face-management* skills legitimate established order and speaking of *right/wrong* and *good/bad* establishes norms and beliefs (Samra-Fredericks, 2003: 153). Likewise, Boden (1995) suggests that persuasion is achieved by the construction of arguments, use of personal pronouns, intersubjectivity and position statements. The author also observes that combative pronouns, inter-turn and intra-turn pauses, provocative statements and using another person's phrases as a springboard of attack signal conflict and tensions in meetings. Retrospective accounts of the past, present and future support sense-giving and thereby influences decision-making processes (Huisman, 2001). It is important to underline, however, that there may be contradictions between the *content of speech*, i.e. what is being said, and *how it is enacted*. When this happens, the non-verbal behavior is the one which general primes over the content of the speech. This leads us to consider the bodily behavior dimension of the conduct practices of meetings.

Bodily behavior is another dimension of the *conduct practices* of meeting which may influence its dynamics and expresses different meetings functions. For instance, participants can walk into a corner of the room to demonstrate their clear separation from other parties in the meeting (Schwarz and Balogun, 2007), leave the room to signal their disagreement (Schwarz, 2009), become restless and use facial movements to indicate their emotions (Howe, 1986), pace up and down the room to show their discomfort and anxiety or sit clearly separated from the rest of a group to signal their status (Hodgkinson and Wright, 2002). By introducing a LEGO-building exercise in a workshop, Bürgi et al. (2005) show that the use of hands in workshops can support cognitive processes (sense-making and critical reflection) and social processes (relationship-building). Laughter can have a range of different functions in meetings such as building a good atmosphere (Kangasharju and Nikko, 2009), downplaying or negating a previous speaker’s statement to exert influence (Schwarz, 2009), saving face (Kangasharju and Nikko, 2009) or to signal status (van Praet, 2009).

Besides body and talk, artifacts are also a crucial element which may have an influence on meeting practices. There are several artifacts which can be used in meetings: PowerPoint, electronic devices, documents, room arrangement, *ground rules*, games, flipchart, whiteboard, strategic tools, etc. For instance, Kaplan (2010) suggests that PowerPoint influences: 1) the cognitive function of meetings by supporting sense-making and generating new ideas, 2) the political function of meetings by enabling individuals or groups to draw boundaries and control access to strategy making, and 3) the coordinating function by creating a space for discussion and compiling information. However, PowerPoint is also seen critically because it may reduce critical reflection, limit opportunities for exploring topics that were not on the agenda (Gabriel, 2008) and focusing attention on the format instead of the content (Kaplan, 2010). Today, PowerPoint has already become such a taken-for-granted tool in meetings that using it in an 'inexperienced' way may delegitimize the author (Kaplan, 2010) and not using it at all may have a greater symbolic power than using it (Gabriel, 2008).

Written texts may also influence meetings. Specifically, Spee and Jarzabkowski (forthcoming) show how written texts connect different meetings over time, may influence meetings' agenda and may regulate the flow of discussion during the meeting. Similarly, Volkema and Niederman (1996) show that the use of documents in meetings influences whether meetings end on time and how active participants are in discussions. Workshop facilitation devices such as flipcharts or whiteboards help participants to brainstorm and develop a shared understanding (Blackler et al., 2000; Schwarz and Balogun, 2007).

Ground rules, typically expressed in writing on a flipchart or whiteboard, are artifacts that are frequently used in strategy workshops to support the suspension of the traditional hierarchy and to create an atmosphere that allows for open dialogue and critical reflection (Schwarz and Balogun, 2007; Seidl et al., 2010). Lastly, strategic tools are also frequently used in meetings, especially in strategy workshops, such as the SWOT analysis, stakeholder analysis or scenario planning. They can be used to structure the discussion, spark creative thinking, enhance sense-making processes or even guide the discussion into specific directions (Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Schwarz and Balogun, 2007). Finally, the room arrangement significantly influences the meeting dynamics, participation and the formation of alliances (Schwartzman, 1989; Asmuß and Svennevig, 2009; Whittington et al., 2006).

In terms of concluding meetings, several *termination practices* have been identified in the literature. For instance, Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008: 1410) creates two practices which

create a bridge to subsequent meetings – *working groups* and *rescheduling of issues* – and two practices that re-couple meeting results to the wider organization – *voting* and *stage-managing*. Similarly, Schwarz and Balogun (2007) identify specific re-coupling practices such as agreeing on a list of recommendations, actions and deadlines, or setting up follow-up meetings. In the same vein, Mezias and colleagues (2001) suggest to focus on the execution of decisions and recommendations at the end of a meeting like assigning responsibilities, creating a timetable and a chain of command. As pointed out by Boden (1994), closing a meeting is an interactional accomplishment with several steps such as asking for further remarks and setting up further action points. Typically, closing a meeting is carried out by talk and underlined by bodily behavior such as arranging papers or closing pens (Boden, 1994). It can be triggered by finishing the discussion of the last agenda item (Boden, 1994) or by the emergence of several side discussions and smaller-party talks (Howe, 1986).

II. Contingency Factors

So far, our literature review indicates that meetings fulfill five functions in organizations which may translate in three categories of meeting practices. As shown in figure 1, these functions and practices may be influenced by what we call here *contingency factors*. This means that meetings are embedded in a context which may shape meeting dynamics and outcomes. These factors can be divided into three categories: the environmental, the organizational and the individual contingency factors.

a. Environmental Contingency Factors

The literature suggests that characteristics of the environment such as its dynamism and its complexity has an impact on meeting functions (coordination, cognitive, political, symbolic and social), on meeting practices (initiation, conduct and termination practices) and on the pattern of meetings series. For example, Boden (1995) suggests that a rapidly changing environment requires a continuous updating and 'tuning' of organizational members that can be achieved through meetings. Supporting this notion, Eisenhardt (1989) observes that in high-velocity environments, fast strategic decision-making is enabled by more frequent meetings as well as consensus with qualification, smooth group processes and accelerated cognitive processes in meetings. Similarly, Grant (2003), in examining the change of strategic planning processes, observes that an increasingly unstable, complex and volatile environment has led to shorter and more informal meetings with a stronger focus on discussions around a few underlying issues.

Anthropologists have also demonstrated that national and local cultures influence the way meetings are conducted (Bailey, 1965; Howe, 1986; Schwartzman, 1989). For example, by comparing anthropological accounts of meetings in different Non-Western cultures and meetings in North-America, Schwartzman (1989) concludes that national and local cultures do influence meeting processes.

Finally, organizational members might have difficulty interpreting and assessing changes in the environment, which may create uncertainty and ambiguity related to environmental factors. As both Schwartzman (1989) and Weick (1995) remark, these situations of uncertainty and ambiguity may increase the need for sense-making within the organization. Since meetings are a central sense-making device where participants compare and discuss different interpretations, these situations of uncertainty and ambiguity are likely to lead to more meetings in the organization (Schwartzman, 1989). In the same vein, Kaplan (2010) observes that increasing uncertainty in the environment is associated with larger amount of data gathered on PowerPoint slides in meetings. Taking the analysis a step further, Weick (1995) suggests that we should distinguish between ambiguity, i.e. a range of different interpretations of the situation, and uncertainty, i.e. no interpretation available. Doing so, Weick (1995) proposes that problems of ambiguity can well be handled in meetings because different interpretations already exist and meetings can be useful in negotiating a shared understanding. In contrast, problems of uncertainty are better addressed by other media because they require search techniques to generate potential interpretations.

b. Organizational Contingency Factors

At the organizational level, several factors including the formal structure, norms, values and beliefs influence meeting patterns, meeting practices and the relative weight of the five functions of meetings. Observing different formal structures, Schwartzman (1989) suggests that the legitimization and validation of social order is more central in hierarchical structures whereas in egalitarian organizational structures sense-making plays a more significant role in meeting. In the same vein, Peck and colleagues (2004) argue that meetings are the enactment of social structures, i.e. the roles and statutes in organizations. This suggests that meeting practices and the emphasis of a particular meeting function may differ depending on whether the organization in question can be characterized as a loosely coupled system or a more tightly structured bureaucracy (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Schwartzman, 1989). For example, Schwartzman observes in her case study that in *organized anarchies* (Cohen and

March, 1974) such as universities the emphasis of meetings is on the cognitive and symbolic functions, i.e. sense-making and cultural validation. In addition, the geographic organizational structure seems to influence meeting patterns and practices. For instance, Kaplan (2010) observes how geographically dispersed teams use PowerPoint differently in meetings than teams where members are located in close proximity.

Organizational norms constitute another important factor influencing meeting practices and functions. Scholars have documented that obedience or risk aversion norms impede sense-making processes (Weick, 1995) and interpretive and procedural norms determine when a decision has been reached (Huisman, 2001). Ideologies, uncertainty and ambiguity within an organization may also influence how meeting participants think about and make sense of a situation or a problem (Boden, 1995; Schwartzman, 1989; Weick, 1995), and have an impact on the prevalence of meetings in the organization (Schwartzman, 1989; Weick, 1995). The history of meeting participants interactions and the strength of informal ties among them also influence meeting practices and dynamics. For instance, Blackler and colleagues (2000) observe how old disagreements between meeting participants lead to power struggles and confrontational conflicts in meetings. Similarly, Kangasharju (1996) notices that pre-established relationships among meeting participants influence the formation of alliances and teams. Finally, the extent to which electronic devices are used in meetings (Stephens and Davis, 2009) and the display of feelings in meetings (Schwartzman, 1989) is also dictated by norms of appropriate behavior.

c. Individual Contingency Factors

Individual characteristics of people participating in meetings may also influence meeting outcomes. In the section related to conduct practices we outlined different mechanisms such as turn-taking which may be mobilized by meeting members to influence meeting processes. Here, we focus on the skills of individuals, particularly linguistic skills and individual leadership styles (Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Huisman, 2001; Boden, 1995) because who participate in meetings can profoundly influence its outcome. To be linguistically skillful, meeting participants need to know when and how to deploy linguistic mechanisms such as questioning, using metaphors and the like (Samra-Fredericks, 2003). For example, Samra-Fredericks (2003) shows that skillfully using linguistic features may allow meeting participants to balance out and even overcompensate for a disadvantage in cultural and political authority.

The leadership skills and styles of meeting participants may also deeply influence meeting dynamics. For instance, Weick (1995) notes that autocratic leadership can discourage sense-making processes in meetings. Similarly, Asmuß and Svennevig (2009) emphasize that leadership may be used to influence or dominate the interaction in meetings via sense-giving. Nielsen (2009) complements this perspective by noting that in fact organizational members expect and actively seek interpretations by their managers in meetings. In order to exert leadership, these managers then need to convince their employees of the quality and relevance of their interpretation.

Besides linguistics skills and the leadership style, the formal position of individuals within the organization also influences meeting practices. For example, Brinkerhoff (1972) demonstrates that a manager's position in the hierarchy is strongly related to his or her use of staff conferences. In addition, Schwarz and Balogun (2007) as well as Blackler and colleagues (2000) show that the functional and managerial authority of organizational members, their closeness to certain strategic issues as well as the different perspectives that come with their formal positions influences who will take part in a meeting and who will not. In the same vein, the hierarchical position of a meeting participant impacts how he or she can exert influence in a meeting (Clifton, 2009) and how alliances are formed (Kangasharju, 2002). Finally, Hambrick and Mason (1984; Hambrick, 2007) and Gautam (2005) suggest that a manager's characteristics in terms of experiences, values and personality may influence behaviors in meetings.

III. Impact on the Strategy Process

Having considered the different aspects of meetings and the contingency factors influencing them, we now synthesize the literature which attempted to link meeting functions and meeting practices to the strategy process in organizations. While some authors have argued that meetings are to a large extent inefficient and a waste of time (Krattenmaker, 2000; Mankins, 2004), others claimed that translating meeting results into organizational outcomes is challenging (Johnson et al., 2006; Bourque and Johnson, 2008; Johnson et al., 2010; MacIntosh et al., 2010; Seidl et al., 2010; Schwartzman, 1989). Whereas we believe that under some conditions meetings may certainly be ineffective, several scholars have identified specific meeting practices or characteristics which establish a relationship between meetings and organizational outcomes.

For instance, specific termination practices such as stage-managing or agreeing on a list of actions and deadlines are positively associated with the re-coupling of meeting results to the wider organization (Schwarz and Balogun, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; MacIntosh et al., 2010). Similarly, the formalization of meaning in meeting minutes has an impact on the translation of decisions into organizational outcomes (e.g. Schwartzman, 1989; Boden, 1994; Iedema, 1999). Storytelling and the interpretation of the meetings is believed to play a crucial role in translating meeting discussions into organizational outcomes (Schwartzman, 1989). Furthermore, strategy workshops and meetings need to be timed appropriately in order to feed into the strategy process (Schwarz and Balogun, 2007).

The frequency and context of meetings seems to be related to its impact on the strategy process. Indeed, MacIntosh and colleagues (2010) as well as Schwarz and Balogun (2007) find that series of meetings or workshops held with a high frequency increases the impact on the strategy process. There are also indications that external pressure such as a crisis increases the likelihood of workshop results and decisions being re-coupled to the wider organization (MacIntosh et al., 2010; Schwarz and Balogun, 2007).

Taken together, these studies suggest that meetings and workshops do have an impact on organizational outcomes and to some extent on the strategy process; although the process of *how* meeting discussions and results are translated into organizational outcomes is less clear-cut. Consequently, one may ask the question *how* meeting functions and practices influence the strategy process. In the literature, there is fairly limited evidence to answer this question because the interest in linking meeting functions and practices with the strategy process has only arisen recently (Jarzabkowksi and Seidl, 2008; Christiansen and Varnes, 2007; Bowman, 1995; Adams, 2004; Johnson et al., 2010; Peck et al., 2004; MacIntosh et al., 2010). The next section draws a picture of our knowledge about how meeting functions and practices impact the strategy process by using the generic evolutionary model of (C1) variation, (C2) selection and (C3) retention.

C1 Impact on Variation

Various scholars recognize that particular meeting practices and functions support and may even be necessary for the emergence of variations, i.e. the emergence of various alternatives in meetings and strategy workshops. In terms of the cognitive function of meetings, Bowman (1995), Mezias and colleagues (2001) as well as Seidl and colleagues (2010) point to the importance of challenging implicit assumptions and generative rules that guide action of

organizational members in order for variation to occur. This can be achieved by different practices such as carrying out the meeting at a different location, away from the office (MacIntosh et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2010) or invite heterogeneous participants to the meeting.

Regarding the political function of meetings, the freedom provided to meeting members may influence variation. Indeed, by restraining the influence on a meeting and allowing for a free discussion, chairs or managers may encourage the emergence of variations (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008). Along the same lines, Schwarz and Balogun (2007) note that variations are more likely to occur if the discussion is facilitated by an external person because political power can be counterbalanced. However, meeting with a considerable number of senior managers is more likely to introduce strategic change (Whittington et al., 2006). This means that the lack of power of meeting participants can hinder variation. As MacIntosh and colleagues (2010) observe, middle managers find it difficult to introduce variations to the overall strategy of the firm because they lack the authority and autonomy to determine the future course of action for the organization.

Within the symbolic function, rituals in meetings and workshops may also contribute to variation of the strategic direction of an organization. For instance, Johnson and colleagues (2010) find that strategic change is more likely to emerge when the *liturgy* used in workshops, i.e. the prescribed form of a ritual, is legitimate and "leads participants to think and act in ways that are distinct from the everyday" (Johnson et al., 2010: 3). On the other hand, Peck and colleagues (2004) and Hendry and Seidl (2003) find that the more ritualized, i.e. formulized and rule-governed a meeting is the less likely variation is to occur.

In terms of the social function of meetings, MacIntosh and colleagues (2010) observe that building strong relationships among workshop participants and with the facilitator allow for frank and probing exchanges thereby allowing variation to occur. Furthermore, the expression and handling of emotions influences the emergence of variation because challenging specific norms, values and beliefs is a highly emotional process (Seidl et al., 2010; Bowman, 1995). For example, Hodgkinson and Wright (2002) observe that when the process of identifying alternatives to the existing strategy is too stressful for a CEO, he/she may begin skipping strategic workshops which would lead to strategic chance failure.

Finally, as has already been pointed out, time is a central factor in the emergence of new strategic initiatives. For example, series of workshops or meetings help with short intervals

and which allow the detailing of the future course of organizational action has the tendency to increase the likelihood for new strategic ideas to emerge within the organization (MacIntosh et al., 2010; Schwarz and Balogun, 2007; Mezias et al., 2001).

C2 Impact on Selection

If selection refers to choosing from a set of alternatives, then the role of meetings in the selection of strategic initiatives has not been adequately addressed in the literature. While there are indications that decisions might in fact be made *outside* of meetings (Christiansen and Varnes, 2007; Mirivel and Tracy, 2005; Peck et al., 2004; Howe, 1986), there is evidence that cognitive functions of meetings are important to set and communicate standards or to increase the visibility of projects at higher hierarchical levels, thereby improving the probability of a project to be selected (Christiansen and Varnes, 2007). This would increase the likelihood to select new strategic initiatives. When decisions are made in meetings, Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) note that achieving consensus is a mechanism which allows selecting among various alternatives; and voting is a mechanism which has the tendency to deselect variations, i.e. to reject new alternatives. Selecting alternatives also involves the political functions of meetings. For example, building and showing support for a specific strategic initiative is fundamental for being selection (Adams, 2004). Similarly, Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) show that chairs of meetings can use their influence to select alternatives which advantage them.

C3 Impact on Retention

The retention dimension of the strategy process involves whether the implementation of new strategic ideas or the continuation of current strategy. As Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) emphasize, meetings not only contribute to changing the existing strategy of an organization, but also to actively stabilizing the current strategy and retaining existing strategic initiatives. For instance, the authors recognize that by exerting influence on the discussion and restricting it, chairs or managers may restrain the emergence of variation and thereby favoring the retention of the current strategy. On the cognitive level, Bowman (1995) argues that if discussions remain in the zone of comfortable debate and critical reflection is avoided, then status quo is simply projected. In terms of the symbolic function of meetings, Johnson and colleagues (2010) observe that when the 'liturgy' used is legitimate and grounded, i.e. close to everyday activities of the meeting participants then workshops tend to result in continuity of the current strategy. The continuity of the current strategy can also be achieved by carrying

out the meeting or workshop in the office where everyday activities take place (Johnson et al., 2010).

While meetings can certainly reinforce the current strategy, they can also be the site of the identification of new strategic initiatives. When new ideas are recognized, implementing them and making sure that they last in time is not an easy task. Indeed, as Johnson et al. (2006: 27; *emphasis added*) note "the very separation and anti-structure that [strategy workshops] foster *may hinder the transfer of ideas and plans back to the everyday work situation*". The translation of meeting discussions and decisions into organizational outcomes may also be challenging because the pressure to revert back to the old behavior is too high (Johnson et al., 2006; MacIntosh et al., 2010) or the emotional commitment to decisions may be only transitory (Johnson et al., 2010). Along the same lines, Huisman (2001) suggests that the context-dependency of a decision may explain the difficulty of translating meeting results and decisions into organizational outcomes. If the difficulty to transfer new ideas into the organization is challenging, it is definitely one way which can achieve the retention of strategy. More work will need to explore the relationships between meeting and the implementation of strategy. As the review of the existing literature shows, insights related to the influence of meetings to variation, selection and retention in the strategy process are still very limited and further research in this area is certainly needed.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Our journey has taken us across a variety of findings supporting the relationship between meeting and strategy making. This allowed us to identify what we know about this relationship, but also to map the existing gaps which need to be filled by future research (see Table 1 for the contribution and the gaps identified). Table 4 synthesizes what we think constitute the main research questions which the community should address in the years to come in order to have a better understanding of meetings and their relations to the strategy process.

I. Investigating the Interaction between Meeting Functions and Practices

So far, studies have mostly described the different meeting functions on a stand-alone basis, neglecting the interaction between the different functions. Therefore, insights can be gained from analyzing how the different meeting functions interact and are potentially expressed in diverse meeting practices. For instance, there is evidence that critical reflection and the challenging of underlying assumptions can be a highly emotional process, linking the

cognitive and the social function of meetings (Blackler et al., 2000; Bowman, 1995; Hodgkinson and Wright, 2002; Seidl et al., 2010). Similarly, there are indications that the symbolic function can be linked to the political function, for instance, when the CEO deliberately sits apart from the rest of the management team in order to signal his or her status and at the same time uses the position to exert influence in the discussion (Hodgkinson and Wright, 2002). Furthermore, although there is already a quite significant amount of evidence on different meeting practices with regards to the initiation, conduct and termination of meetings, this evidence is fairly fragmented due to the different approaches and perspectives applied. A more systematic approach to the relationship between meeting functions and meeting practices would certainly allow forming a more holistic understanding of meetings.

TABLE 4:
RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

Themes	Linkage	Research Questions and Opportunities
Meeting Functions and Practices	B1:B5 to B1:B5	1) How do different meeting functions interact?
	B6 to B1:B5/ B1:B5 to B6	2) How are meeting functions expressed in initiation, conduct and termination practices? 3) What is/ are the function(s) of specific initiation, conduct and termination practices?
	B1:B6	How do meeting functions and meeting practices differ in… – different types of meetings? – meetings on different hierarchical levels? – formal vs. informal/ side-discussions at meetings?
Contingency Factors	A1:A2 to B1:B5	What is the influence of environmental and organizational contingency factors on meeting functions?
	A1:A3 to B6	How do environmental, organizational and individual contingency factors influence initiation, conduct and termination practices?
	A1:A2 to B2	How do ambiguity and uncertainty influence cognitive practices in meetings?
Strategy Process	B1:B5 to C2:C3	What is the impact of meeting functions on selection and retention?
	B1:B5 to C1:C3	What is the impact of meeting functions on the top-down vs. bottom-up strategy process?
	B1:B5 to C1:C3	How does the influence of meeting functions on the strategy process differ in … – different types of meetings? – meetings on different hierarchical levels? – meeting vs. other practices/ non-meetings?

As both Schwartzman (1989) and Boden (1994) suggest, the significance of particular meeting functions and the expression in specific meeting practices may differ across different types of meetings. According to extant research, a distinction can be made between formal and informal meetings, top-level vs. lower-level meetings, sovereign vs. subservient meetings, pre- and post-meetings and unscheduled vs. scheduled meetings (Schwartzman, 1989; Boden, 1994). For instance, the symbolic function may play a larger role in formal meetings than in informal meetings. Moreover, research on strategy-making in meetings has so far focused on

strategy workshops and board meetings that represent only a small part of all the meetings taking place in organizations. Hence, future research could also consider meetings on different hierarchical levels, e.g. middle management and lower levels, as well as meetings involving participants from different hierarchical levels.

Finally, there are indications in the extant literature that side-discussions as well as pre- and post-meeting talk may influence meeting dynamics and outcomes. For instance, Mirivel and Tracy (2005) find out that small talk before meetings is important to build relationships and shapes organizational identity. Similarly, Johnson and colleagues (2006) observe that informal discussions during meeting breaks influence meeting dynamics and outcomes. The differentiation between front stage and backstage performance may be helpful to explore the impact of informal side-discussions and their interaction with formal meetings to understand the process strategy-making.

II. Further Exploring Contingency Factors

As our review of the literature suggests, more research is required to further understand the influence of environmental and organizational contingency factors on meeting functions. As Weick (1995) argue to differentiate between situations of ambiguity and situations of uncertainty within the organization and in the environment, further research is required. This would be translated in our context by how do meeting participants deal with situations of uncertainty and situations of ambiguity, and how does it influence the cognitive function of meetings?

It would also be interesting to further compare meeting functions and practices in different countries in order to study the effect of the national and local culture on meetings and their role in the strategy process. Indeed, it is likely that the national and local culture as well as organizational norms, values and beliefs influence the ‘bodily doings’, ‘bodily sayings’ and the use of artifacts in meetings. For instance, Crossland and Hambrick (2007) argue that the upper echelons theory applies differently in various countries because CEOs and top managers may face different kind of constraints.

The indications of Schwartzman (1989) concerning the impact of different formal structures on meeting processes should be further extended. Similarly, a systematic approach to the different effects of norms, values and beliefs on meeting functions and practices is warranted because evidence in the existing literature is rather anecdotal (Weick, 1995; Huisman, 2001; Schwartzman, 1989).

Furthermore, the effects of strong versus weak ties on meeting practices could be a promising research area. We may assume that the strength of networks and relationships has an impact on the political function, especially on team building and alliance formation (Kangasharju, 1996, 2002) as well as exerting influence in meetings.

While there is already a fairly large amount of evidence on the individual contingency factors influencing meetings (Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Huisman, 2001; Boden, 1995; Weick, 1995; Asmuß and Svennevig, 2009), future research should also investigate how environmental, organizational and individual contingency factors influence specific set-up and conduct practices in meetings.

III. Further Researching the Impact on the Strategy Process

A particularly promising area for future research is the relationship between meeting functions and the strategy process at the organizational level because it links micro-level processes to macro-level outcomes thereby answering the call of researchers to *put the micro in the macro* (Johnson et al., 2003: 7). As has been pointed out earlier, one can distinguish between *how* meetings are linked to organizational outcomes and *what* the impact on the strategy process is.

With regards to the first aspect, while there are indications of specific re-coupling practices, there is certainly a need to further increase and systematize our understanding of the link between meetings and the strategy process. Therefore, more investigations into the interpretation of meetings as well as the use of storytelling, minutes and other re-coupling practices in organizations are necessary. In this regard, researchers may also consider the organizational context in which the meetings and workshops are embedded. Possibly it is not only a matter of re-coupling meeting results and decisions with the wider organization, but also a matter of the receptiveness of the organizational context. A better understanding of the relationships between different types of meetings, especially on different organizational levels, may also reveal some aspects of the translation of meeting discussions and decisions into organizational outcomes. Regarding the second aspect, i.e. the impact of meeting functions on the strategy process, future research should not only focus on the impact of meeting functions on variation, but also especially consider selection and retention of strategic initiatives since evidence is fairly limited there (see Table 1).

Future research might also benefit from differentiating between the two generic types of strategy processes, the top-down and bottom-up approach (e.g. Mintzberg and Waters, 1985;

Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Burgelman (1991) conceptualizes these two different types of strategy-making as the *induced strategy process* and the *autonomous strategy process*. While the former refers to strategic initiatives which are generally pushed in a top-down manner and follows the current strategy of the organization, the latter is related to strategic initiatives which emerge at the bottom of the organization and outside its current strategic orientation. Since autonomous strategies are typically developed *outside* and induced strategies *inside* the regular structural context, meetings are also likely to have different functions in the top-down and the bottom-up process of strategy-making. While more informal and irregular meetings may therefore be more important for emergent strategies, we could hypothesize that more formal and regular meetings, i.e. in the official strategic planning cycle, are more directly related to the top-down perspective on strategy development.

Finally, the relationship between meetings and other practices in strategizing may be an area with high potential for future research. In particular, the interaction between meetings and other practices in strategizing may reveal important insights for understanding the impact of meetings on variation, selection and retention.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCLUSION

In this paper we have provided a comprehensive review of the burgeoning literature on meetings and their role in the strategy process. Based on this review we have developed an integrative framework that provides an overview of the way in which different aspects of the extant meeting research relates to each other. With this framework we make several contributions to the exiting literature.

First, our framework provides insights into the kind of influence that meetings might have on the strategy process, thereby contributing to the strategy process literature (Langley, 2007; Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew et al., 1992; Sminia, 2009; van de Ven, 1992). More specifically, our integrative framework contributes to the strategy process by identifying the contribution of meetings to the evolutionary mechanisms of variation, selection and retention, by which many strategic initiatives make their way in organizations (Burgelman, 1991; Floyd and Lane, 2000; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Nelson and Winter, 1982).

Second, based on a thorough analysis of the literature, this framework identifies and synthesizes the different contingency factors that are likely to affect the meeting process and its potential impact on the strategy process. Third, by integrating and organizing previously

fragmented literatures, our framework creates a common base for interdisciplinary exchange and for a holistic understanding of the relationships between meetings and strategy process.

Fourth, by answering the calls from scholars for more work on the role of meetings in strategy formation (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Johnson et al., 2007; Wooldridge et al., 2008), this framework "corrects" the overemphasis on individuals at the expense of group dynamics in the strategic management literature (Wooldridge et al., 2008). Finally, based on this integrative framework we have outlined different directions for future research in this important area.

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Appendix Table 2: Literature Review

#	Studies/ Year	Research Question/ Focus	Academic Field: Theoretical Lens	Research Method	Function(s) of Meetings[1)]	Key Findings[2)]
1	Adams (2004)	What is the role of public hearings in the democratic process?	Political Studies: Literature on public participation in policy analysis	Interviews with 55 active citizens	**Political,** coordination, social	**B3:** Public hearings are important at the beginning (agenda-setting) and at the end of the policy process (demonstrate support). **B1:** They are also used to provide information to policy-makers. **B5:** Public hearings are equally important to build networks and relationships.
2	Asmuß and Svennevig (2009)	Main characteristics of meetings and meeting talk	Communication Studies: Conversation analysis	Review of extant literature	**Cognitive, political**	**A1:** Leadership style influences sense-giving and sense-making as well as how conflict is dealt with **B3:** Team building and forming alliances occurs in meetings, by verbal and nonverbal means **B6:** Room arrangements influences formation of alliances; turn-taking and topic progression are typically nonverbal phenomenon
3	Bailey (1965)	When do councils make decisions by consensus or by majority voting?	Cultural Anthropology	Secondary analysis of anthropological accounts in Indian village panchayats	**Coordination,** symbolic	**B1:** Larger councils/ committees (>15 people) will always seek majority voting. Smaller councils/ committees will seek consensus vs. majority-voting, if (a) the councils needs to take actions (b) it is an elite council and (c) there is pressure from outside. **B4:** Using appropriate behavior for disagreement/ conflict signals that the participant knows the etiquette.
4	Black (1983)	Use of language and behavior in community meetings	Cultural Anthropology: Sociolinguistics	Ethnography of community meetings in the Western Caro-line island of Tobi	**Political,** symbolic	**B3:** The traditional chief shows his power by habitually coming late to meetings and by silencing the audience with a quiet cough. **B4:** Meetings allow seeing and interpreting a person's status. Participants conform with appropriate behavior, e.g. stop laughing, in order to validate the established order
5	Blackler et al. (2000)	Analysis of organizations as networks of activity	Management: Activity theory	Longitudinal case study of three multidisciplinary groups over four months	**Coordination,** cognitive, political, social	**B1:** Meetings among multidisciplinary groups act as important source of information exchange. **B2:** Shared understanding is difficult to achieve if there is high uncertainty and different perspectives. **B3:** Power struggles can ensue based on old rivalries. **B5:** Uncertainty and power struggles may lead to high levels of anxiety; series of meetings result in creating a shared identity **B6:** Whiteboards support creating a shared understanding
6	Boden (1994)	The role of talk in business and organizations in general	Sociology: Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis	Observation and recording of talk in a variety of settings and organizations	**Coordination,** symbolic	**B1:** Larger meetings are typically more information-oriented, smaller meetings decision-oriented. **B4:** Openings to a meeting bracket out the everyday and bracket in the local meeting membership. **B6:** Composition of a meeting considerably influences meeting dynamics. Turn-taking in formal meetings is directed by the chair, while in informal meetings it takes a more conversational form.
7	Boden (1995)	Sequential process / structure of talk-based interaction in meetings	Sociology: Conversation analysis	Observation and recording of talk in a variety of settings and organizations	**Coordination,** symbolic	**B1:** Meetings are important for continuous updating of information and to bring the right people together at the right time to look at the same issue (simultaneity). **B4:** Meetings must also be seen as symbolic because the need to physically assemble decreases. **B6:** Specific linguistic features support persuasion, e.g. personal pronouns, and others signal conflict and tension.
8	Bourque and Johnson (2008)	Analysis of a strategy workshop as a ritual	Management: Ritual theory	Analysis of a strategy away-day of a multinational corporation	**Symbolic**, cognitive, social	**B4:** Strategy away-days are highly ritualistic events, characterized by three phases: separation from the every-day, a 'liminal' experience, integration back to the organization. The 'liminal' experience supports critical reflection and group solidarity, but may also be highly emotional. **C1-C3:** The more ritualized a workshop, the more difficult it is to transfer results to everyday work.
9	Bowman (1995)	How do workshops achieve high levels of commitment to good quality strategies?	Management: Cognitive concepts	Own experience in facilitating >40 strategy workshops from 1988 to 1995	**Cognitive**	**C1:** For variation to occur, the intuitive core, i.e. implicit assumptions, shared by the team, need to be made explicit and challenged. **C3:** If strategic debate remains in the zone of comfortable debate, then status quo is simply projected.
10	Brinkerhoff (1972)	How do managers use staff conferences?	Management	Survey of 680 managers in a large American company	**Coordination**	**B1:** Staff conferences are found to be important for bringing people together to coordinate activities and solve contingencies, i.e. problems. **A3:** A manager's position was found to be strongly related to the use of staff conferences for coordination purposes.
11	Bürgi et al. (2005)	What is the link between hand and mind in strategy-making?	Management: Physiological theories, psychological theories, social constructionism	Facilitation of 2-day strategy workshop with telecom company	**Cognitive, social**	**B2:** By building a LEGO representation of the organization and its environment, workshop participants engaged in sense-making, critical reflection and recognition of important issues **B5:** At the same time, emotions were displayed, a common identity was created and relationships were built.
12	Christiansen and Varnes (2007)	How and where are decisions made in and on innovation?	Management: Network process perspective	Semi-structured interviews and observations of gate meetings in 2 projects	**Coordination,** symbolic	**B1:** Few decisions are actually made at gate meetings; rather meetings set standards for approval of innovation projects. **B4:** Gate meetings increase visibility of projects and project managers at higher levels, supporting the selection of specific projects.
13	Clifton (2009)	How can participants exert influence in decision-making?	Communication Studies: Conversation analysis	Video-recordings of a management team meeting at a for-profit language school	**Coordination, political**	**B1:** Decision-making in meetings first requires decision-making talk, then announcing the decision by projecting future action and finally agreement by meeting participants. Announcing a decision is typically bound to the chair or a manager. **B3:** Influence can be exerted through formulations, allowing others to take ownership, negating a prior statement and laughter.
14	Deppermann et al. (2010)	How do participants manage transitions in meetings multimodally?	Communication Studies: Conversation analysis	Analysis of video-data of a meeting at a German computer firm	N/A	**B6:** Meeting participants manage transitions between topics and breaks in meetings multimodally, i.e. employing talk, bodily behavior and artifacts. Each action opens up a range of possible next actions and is locally sensitive.
15	Eisenhardt (1989)	How are fast strategic decisions made?	Management: Decision-making literature	Case study of eight, small micro-computer firms (1983-1985)	**Coordination,** cognitive, social	**A1:** High-velocity environments place a premium on fast strategic decision-making, enabled by more frequent meetings, accelerated cognitive processes and smooth group processes in meetings.

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16	Frake (1969)	Comparison of different talk-based events	Cultural Anthropology: Linguistic analysis	Observation of behavior in Yakan society	N/A	**B6:** Different speech behavior determines the type of meeting being held. The relevant dimensions of speech behavior include topic, purpose, role structure and integrity.
17	Gabriel (2008)	Influence of PowerPoint in business and education	Management	Literature review and own experiences in lecturing	**Cognitive**, political	**B6:** The use of PowerPoint influences the nature of the discussion, reduces critical awareness and supports the authority of the presenter. Disseminating slides before the presentation reduces the presenter's possibilities for surprise, digression and improvisation.
18	Gautam (2005)	How can hospital board meetings be made more effective?	Management	Own experience as trustee on a hospital board	**Coordination**	**B1:** Board meetings may be ineffective when the purpose is not clear. **B6:** They may also be ineffective due to inappropriate initiation and conduct practices, such as choosing the wrong participants, insufficient preparation or ineffective chairing of the meeting. **C1, C3:** Participation by insider trustees makes change and variation difficult, whereas more outsider trustees enables change.
19	Grant (2003)	How have companies' strategic planning practices changed in the past?	Management: 'Rational design' vs. 'emergent process' school	Comparative case study of 10 leading oil and gas majors	**Cognitive**	**A1:** An increasingly unstable and complex environment leads to shorter and more informal meetings with a stronger focus on discussions around a few underlying issues **B2:** Meetings are increasingly used to challenge underlying assumptions and beliefs and to identify critical issues
20	Hendry and Seidl (2003)	How are operating and strategy routines related to strategic change?	Management: Niklas Luhmann's theory on social systems	Theoretical	**Cognitive,** symbolic	**B2:** Meetings/ workshops are conceptualized as strategic episodes that suspend discursive and organizational structures and replace them with new ones; this may allow for strategic change. **B4:** Board meetings may be more a ritualistic confirmation of the existing strategy, rather than generating strategic change.
21	Hodgkinson and Wright (2002)	Use of strategic-planning techniques to prevent strategic inertia	Management: Janis and Mann's (1977) conflict theory of decision-making	Analysis of own scenario-planning assignment as consultants	**Political,** cognitive	**B2:** Workshops aimed to generate alternatives to the existing strategy by using scenario planning techniques. **B3, B6:** The CEO used two mirrors in her office, sitting remote from the other team and taking control of the whiteboard, to dominate the meetings and steer them in the direction she wanted.
22	Hodgkinson et al. (2006)	Characteristics and role of strategy workshops in strategy-making processes	Management: Design School, Planning School, Learning School	Survey among 1,337 managers and employees in the UK	**Cognitive,** social	**B2:** Workshops make sense of emergent strategies. **B5:** They improve relationships with peers. **B6:** Strategy workshops are typically restricted to top management. Strategic tools are not frequently used in workshops, except for SWOT that serves as a framework for organizing discussions.
23	Howe (1986)	The village political system	Cultural Anthropology: Community power structure, action theory	Ethnography of Kuna village-meetings in Panama	**Political,** Coordination	**B3:** Rhetoric and persuasion are achieved by different speaking styles, i.e. linguistic features. **B1:** A 'pre-decision' made in a 'rump session' of influential individuals may be overturned and remade or unmade when the actual formal meeting occurs. **B6:** Murmurs, facial expressions or restlessness are used to express the mood of participants.
24	Huisman (2001)	Focus on the interactional, talk-based processes of decision-making	Management: Conversation analysis	Video-taping of 12 management-level meetings in 3 different Dutch organizations	**Coordination**	**B1:** Decision-making is an incremental activity and it is not straightforward to identify the moment when a decision has been made. **A1:** The orientation of a group to procedural norms and the meaning of language determines what a decision actually 'is'.
25	Iedema (1999)	How are formality and closure achieved interactively?	Communication Studies: Recontextualization	Observations of bi-weekly meetings in a planning project	N/A	**B6:** Formalization of talk/ meaning is achieved by shifting from personalized talk to a more formal and impersonal logic, e.g. via indirect speech. Meeting minutes are also used to formulize meaning.
26	Jarzabkowski and Balogun (2009)	How is strategic integration achieved in the strategic planning process?	Management: Activity theory	Case study of strategic planning in a multi-national company	**Political,** Coordination	**B1:** Strategic integration cannot be achieved by only bringing people physically together, but rather active negotiations and compromises are also necessary. **B3:** Political interactions over the course of several meetings shape conversational roles and dynamics and may result in an alignment of interests.
27	Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008)	How do strategy meetings contribute to stabilizing or destabilizing of strategic orientations?	Management: Niklas Luhmann's theory on social systems	Longitudinal study of strategy meetings at 3 UK universities	**Political,** cognitive	**B2:** Free discussion allows the generation of new ideas. **B3:** Agenda-setting and chairing a meeting may be used to exert influence. Restricted discussion suppresses new ideas. Topics can be kept alive by rescheduling them for future meetings. **C1:** Stage-managing allows re-coupling variations to the wider organization. **C2:** Voting tends to deselect variations.
28	Johnson et al. (2006)	Development of a theoretically informed empirical research agenda for strategy workshops	Management: Ritual theory	N/A	**Symbolic,** social	**B4:** Workshops can be conceptualized as rituals consisting of three phases: separation, transition and incorporation. It may also be helpful to distinguish between front- and backstage performance. **B5:** Workshops may involve highly emotional periods. They may result in increased solidarity and emotional commitment. **C1:** Workshops may not be able to effect change because of the separation from everyday activities.
29	Johnson et al. (2010)	How do rituals influence the behavior of workshop participants and strategy outcomes?	Management: Ritual theory	Interviews and direct observations of 7 workshops	**Symbolic**	**B4:** The liturgy, i.e. the given form of a ritual, needs to be legitimate to achieve a specific purpose. **C1**: To achieve strategic change, liturgy needs to be appropriate and legitimate; hierarchical norms need to be relaxed. Efforts may be supported by a specialist facilitator and an away-location. **C3**: To achieve continuity, the liturgy needs to be appropriate and legitimate, the agenda grounded and hierarchical norms intact.
30	Kangasharju (1996)	How are teams created in multiparty conversations and what are its consequences?	Communication Studies: Conversation analysis	Video-taping of 25 meetings over the course of a year	**Political**	**A2:** Extra-interactional, pre-established relationships may influence the development of teams/ alliances in meetings. **B3:** Teams can be spontaneously created in a systematic way through argumentation, linguistic features and bodily behavior (e.g. smile, gaze). They are created when conflicts arise or when participants collaborate in story-telling. The creation of a team leads to team talk.
31	Kangasharju	How do participants align in	Communication Studies:	Video-taping of 25 meetings	**Political**	**A3**: Occupational background and status of participants influences the formation of alliances.

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	(2002)	teams during a disagreement?	Conversation analysis	over the course of a year		**B3**: Alliances correct statements, control one-sided stances, are set-up in decision-making situations and can be rewarding for participants as a social activity. **B6:** Alliances are formed by particular turn-taking sequences.
32	Kangasharju and Nikko (2009)	What are the different functions and activities associated with joint laughter in meetings?	Communication Studies: Conversation analysis	Video-taping of Finnish-Swedish team meetings	**Social**	**B5:** Laughter is used to create collegiality and a positive atmosphere. It signals mutual understanding, reduces hierarchical differences and saves 'face'. **B6:** Laughter is often constructed collectively, opened by an invitation for laughter (e.g. a 'laughable', a gaze or an interruption) and upgrading sequences by other meeting participants.
33	Kaplan (2010)	How is PowerPoint used in strategy-making?	Management: Strategy-as-practice, genre-in-use, epistemic cultures	Eight-month ethnographic study of a telecom company	**Cognitive, political,** Coordination	**B6:** PowerPoint influences (1) the cognitive function of meetings by supporting sense-making and generating new ideas, (2) the political function of meetings by enabling individuals or groups to draw boundaries and control access to strategy making and (3) the coordination function by creating a space for discussion and compiling information.
34	MacIntosh et al. (2010)	Under what circumstances do strategy workshops bring about strategic change?	Management: Strategy-as-practice	Observation and facilitation of 99 strategy workshops in 10 companies over the course of 5 years	**Cognitive**	**B2:** Critical reflection is facilitated through strong relationships, informal, non-hierarchical character of meetings and venue away from everyday activities. **C1:** Successful workshops achieving strategic change are characterized by a series of workshops with high frequency, participation by senior management, autonomy, an accountability framework that links workshop to day-to-day activities and ground rules.
35	Mezias et al. (2001)	Development of a process model for change workshops	Management: Individual and collective cognition	Theoretical concepts and case studies of change workshops	**Cognitive**	**C1:** Achieving strategic change in a workshop can be supported by commitment of a critical mass of top managers, high diversity/ heterogeneity of participants, an external facilitator, a neutral site, sufficient time for discussions and an adequate group size.
36	Mintzberg (1973)	Everyday-activities of senior managers	Management: Different schools of thought on strategy	Observation of senior managers in their everyday activities	**Coordination,** symbolic, political	**B1:** Meetings support coordination of activities and information flow. **B3:** Meetings are a forum for negotiations. **B4:** They also cover ceremonials.
37	Mirivel and Tracy (2005)	The role of pre-meeting talk in organizations	Communication Studies: Small talk, institutional identity work	Video-taping of weekly staff meetings and interviews	**Social,** Symbolic, Coordination	**B5:** Small talk before the meeting is important to build relationships, enhancing work processes. Pre-meeting talk is also institutional identity work by shaping and enacting an organization's culture. **B4:** Meetings serve as an indicator of organizational status. **B1**: Large meetings are more information-oriented, less decision-oriented.
38	Myers (1986)	Use of language in Pintupi meetings	Cultural Anthropology	Ethnography of Australian Aborigines	**Social**	**B5:** Before specific topics are discussed, meetings must first sustain relationships among participants, a shared identity as a community and the value of individual autonomy.
39	Nielsen (2009)	How do managers and employees collaborate in interpreting specific issues?	Communication Studies: Grounded theory, organizational theory	Audio- and video-taping of department meetings in five Danish firms	**Social,** cognitive	**B5:** Meetings play a crucial role in the socialization of new organizational members by demonstrating accepted behavior and language as well as norms. **B2:** Specific language use orients participants towards a collective interpretation of the situation. **A3:** Employees actively seek interpretations by their manager.
40	Olsen (1970)	Budgetary behavior	Political Studies: Decision-making literature	Case study of a budgetary process in a Norwegian commune	**Symbolic,** Coordination	**B4:** The ritual and ceremonies in budgetary meetings contribute to legitimacy, compliance and consensus. **B1:** Budgeting is one of the most important instruments for coordination of scarce resources.
41	Oswick (2007)	Aspects of time, space and relationships in meetings	Communication Studies: Textscapes	Detailed analysis of a documentary on a board meeting	**Social**	**B5:** Relationships among participants and with externals influence meeting dynamics. **B6:** Time is an important feature of meetings as they are influenced by the past, the present and the future (e.g. meeting minutes). Meeting dynamics are also influenced by the location and room arrangements.
42	Peck et al. (2004)	What is the role of board meetings?	Management: Ritual theory	Observations of board meetings and interviews in the UK	**Symbolic,** social	**B4:** Board meetings have the six typical characteristics of a ritual: formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance, symbolism and performance. **B5:** Board meetings are an enactment of the social structure. They sustain social solidarity among members of a community.
43	Samra-Fredericks (2003)	A strategist's linguistic skills in meetings	Management: Conversation analysis	Ethnomethodology and ethnography	**Political,** cognitive	**B6:** Six linguistic features may enable a strategist to exert influence in a meeting and to support sense-making in the group (e.g. accounts of the past, use of metaphors etc.) **A3:** Speakers need to know how and when to employ these linguistic features to successfully influence meeting dynamics.
44	Schwartzman (1989)	How are meetings constructed? Why do they exist and how are they used? How do meetings compare across cultures?	Cultural Anthropology: Anthropology, political language and social constructionist approaches	Observations of meetings and daily interactions in an American mental health organization	**Cognitive, social,** coordination, symbolic, political	**B2:** Meetings are a crucial forum for sense-making and the recognition of issues and problems. **B5:** Meetings are social and cultural validators by allowing individuals to comment on their formal and informal relationships and displaying and validating cultural beliefs. **B1:** Meetings are central for decision-making and producing information. **B4:** By taking part in meetings, participants accept and legitimize the established order. Status is signaled in meetings. **B3**: Meetings may confer power on individuals and display power.
45	Schwarz (2009)	What are key elements of strategy workshops and what is their influence?	Management: Structuration theory (Giddens) and practice theory	2-year observations of strategy workshops at a multinational engineering firm	**Cognitive, political**	**B2:** Workshops are used to generate and discuss new ideas. **B3:** By refusing to take part, participants may exert influence to change the agenda of the workshop. **B6:** Strategy workshops typically include an external facilitator, an off-site environment and little use of formal strategic tools or data. Laughter indicates that statements are not taken serious.
46	Schwarz and Balogun (2007)	How are workshops for strategic review conducted and how do they impact strategy-making?	Management: Strategic episodes, semi-structures, links in time, sequenced steps	Two in-depth, longitudinal case studies using ethnographic techniques	**Political**, cognitive, social	**B3:** Participants try to influence the agenda, play political games and discuss topics in their interest. **B6:** A location away from the office supports critical reflection and relationship-building. An external facilitator guides the discussion and may counterbalance political interest groups. Specific artifacts (e.g. ground rules, games, flipcharts, handwritten slides) are used to create an informal atmosphere, suspend traditional hierarchies, build relationships and document the discussion.
47	Seibold (1979)	Planning and possible formats	Communication Studies	Empirical observations as a	**Cognitive**	**B2**: Success of problem-solving, i.e. recognition of problems and searching for solutions, in meetings and larger conferences can be

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		for meetings, procedures for group problem-solving		consultant to a project		improved by improving planning, formats and procedures. **B6:** Decisions on composition of meeting and on logistics are crucial in enhancing problem-solving in meetings. Different practices for problem-solving are identified.
48	Seidl et al. (2010)	What rule types are found in strategy workshop? How do they contribute to stability or change?	Management: Rules-based perspective	In-depth, 14-month case study of a series of strategy workshops	**Cognitive,** social	**B2:** Changing generative rules that guide action of organizational members requires initiation and use of suspension rules that counter specific defensive rules. Suspension and revision of rules is an effortful accomplishment, but may achieve strategic change. **B5:** The suspension and revision of rules is a highly emotional process that also has an impact on organizational norms, values and beliefs.
49	Spee and Jarzabkowski (2010)	How is a strategic plan constructed as a communicative process?	Management: Montréal school of organizational communication	12-month in-depth longitudinal case study at a British university	**Cognitive, political**	**B6:** Talk and text have a recursive, mutually-constructive relationship, in which the text is both the medium and the outcome of the communication process. Texts connect meetings over time and may shape a meeting's agenda and the flow of discussion. They have a cognitive function by providing a collective meaning platform and a political function by giving power to those that produce the text.
50	Starker (1978)	Ritual aspects of the case conference	Psychology	Case studies of case conferences in mental health organizations	**Symbolic**	**B4:** Case conferences serve several ritual functions for mental health professionals, such as a rite of passage for new members and a change of status.
51	Stephens and Davis (2009)	What influences people to use electronic devices in meetings?	Communication Studies: Social influence model, social information processing model	Survey among 119 people in 20 different organizations	N/A	**A2-A3:** Organizational norms (i.e. observing others and the perception that the behavior is acceptable) have a stronger influence on the use of electronic devices in meetings than individual-level predictors (i.e. experience with new technologies, perception of communication overload).
52	Taylor and Robichaud (2007)	How is the managerial conversation constructed and what are its functions?	Communication Studies: Metacon-versations, narratives, structuration	Detailed analysis of a documentary on a board meeting	**Political,** cognitive, symbolic	**B3**: The board meeting is used to exert influence, negotiate positions and form alliances. **B2:** Narratives are important sense-making devices in meetings. **B4:** Explicit speech in meetings is often accompanied by implicit expressions about status, rights and obligations.
53	Tepper (2004)	What is the role of 'non-routine' gatherings/ forums in the policy process?	Political Studies: Policy-making theories	Secondary research (e.g. reports, public statements)	**Political,** coordination, social	**B3:** Meetings are crucial to set and advance an agenda, create support and keep certain topics alive. **B1:** Meetings are used to call attention to new information/ research. **B5:** Meetings are important to create and sustain communities of experts and personal networks.
54	Terry (1987)	How can commitment be built through a conference?	Management: Organizational theory literature on coalitions	Case study of a conference of a telecommunications union	**Political,** social, coordination, cognitive	**B3:** A conference may build commitment by encouraging identification, involvement and loyalty. **B5:** Giving participants the opportunity to network and build relationships is crucial for success of the conference. **B1:** The conference is used to generate and disseminate information. **B2:** The conference allows recognizing important issues.
55	Tracy (2007)	How are feelings expressed in meetings?	Communication Studies: Conversation analysis	Detailed analysis of a documentary on a board meeting	**Social**	**B5:** Appropriate display of feelings depends on the meeting type and topic discussed. Important topics are typically accompanied by the expression of more intense feelings. **B6:** In meetings, there may be contradictions between what is being said and what is enacted. Feelings are cued by talk as well as nonverbal means.
56	van Praet (2009)	How does the ambassador impose norms and values in weekly staff meetings?	Communication Studies: Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach to interaction	Observation of weekly meetings and interviews at the British embassy	**Political,** symbolic, social	**B3:** The ambassador dominates and controls weekly meetings. He uses them to influence participants. **B4:** The meetings signal the status of the ambassador. **B5:** The meetings are explicitly framed to encourage solidarity, but implicitly are based in hierarchy. **B6:** Talk and bodily behavior of the ambassador signal his status and power in the meeting.
57	van Vree (1999)	Description of meeting rules and behavior from 1400s to today	Sociology: Norbert Elias's theory on civilizing processes	Secondary research of historical accounts	**Social,** political	**B5**: Modern meetings require a constant and flexible expression of affect and emotions. **B3:** Meeting manners and procedural rules take their origin in the development of national parliaments and parliamentary behaviors.
58	Volkema and Niederman (1996)	What is the effect of written group communication on meetings?	Communication Studies: Communication	Analysis of 35 organizational meetings from different institutions	**Political**	**B3:** Control of the agenda is a powerful tool to influence meeting processes and outcomes. **B6:** Meetings were more likely to start and end on time when documents were distributed in advance, an agenda was employed or minutes taken. Document distribution prior to meetings was positively correlated to participation.
59	Weick (1995)	Nature, properties, occasions and processes of sense-making	Management: Sense-making	Theoretical concepts and case studies	**Cognitive,** political	**B2:** Meetings are central to sense-making because they are the settings where most arguments take place. They may be unproductive when they are directed at problems of uncertainty. **B3:** Dominating leadership may restrict meetings.
60	Whittington et al. (2006)	Focus on three specific practices of strategizing/ organizing	Management: Social theory of practice (Bourdieu and de Certeau)	10 case studies of strategic reorgani-zations in the UK and a large-scale survey	**Political**	**A1:** Regulatory pressure may contribute to achieving consensus. **B3:** CEO uses workshops to exert influence and achieve consensus on strategic change. **B6:** Carefully crafting of series of workshops (e.g. location, seating, time-tabling, agenda and flip-charting) allowed CEO to exert influence.

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